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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is a publication of the Administration on Aging. It presents the following statistical information on older Americans: their number, geographic distribution, life expectancy, cost of personal health care, living arrangements, marital status, income, employment, health status and health care utilization. (SJL)

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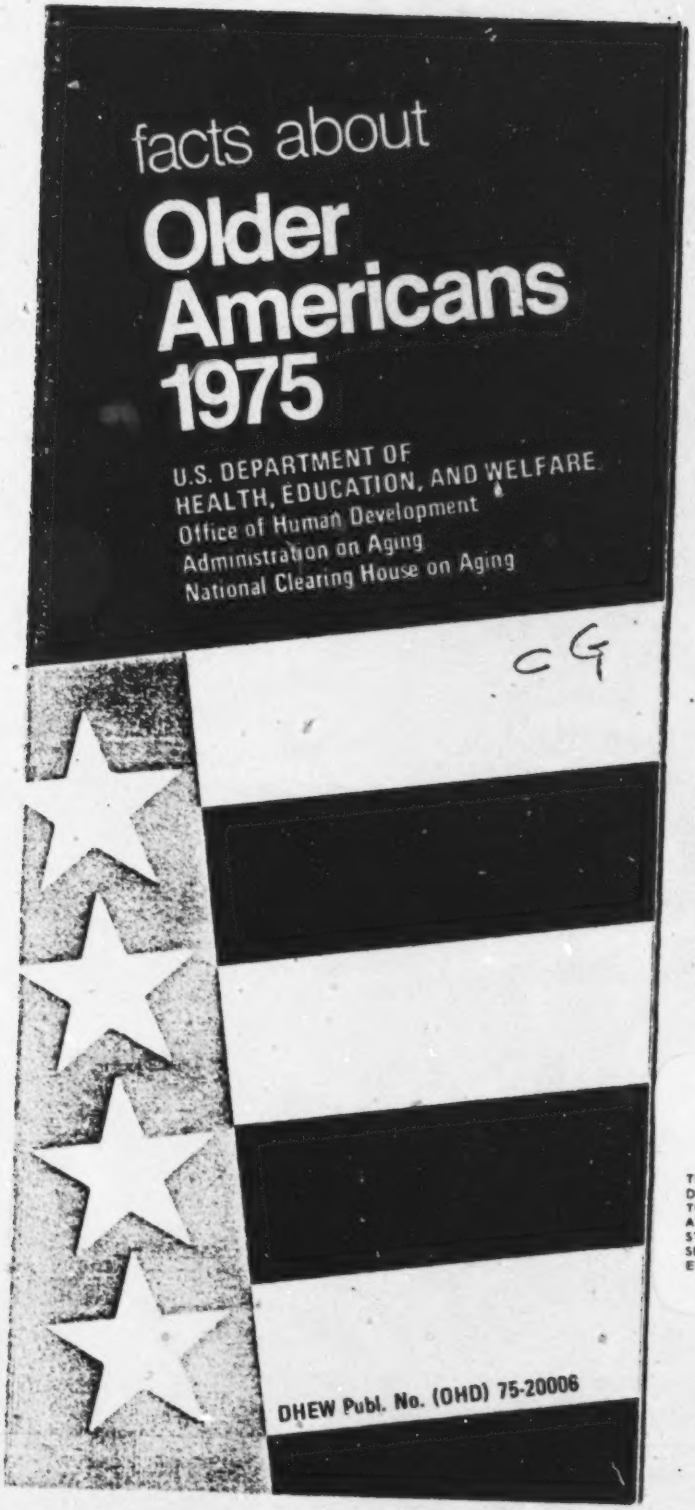

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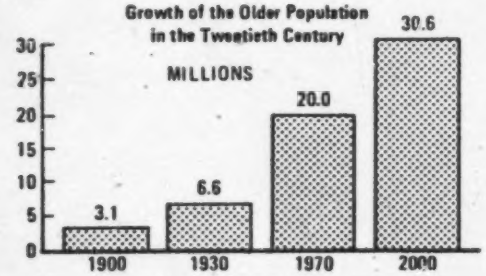
How many older Americans are there?

- In 1974, one in every 10 persons in the U.S. was 65+ (21.8 million men and women.)
- This number is about the same as the total population of the 20 smallest States and the District of Columbia.
- The proportion of the population 65 years old and over varied by race and ethnic origin: 11% for whites, 7% for blacks, and 4% for persons of Spanish origin.
- Between 1900 and 1974, the *percentage* of the U.S. population aged 65+ more than doubled (4.1% in 1900 to 10.3% in 1974) while the number increased about sevenfold (from 3 million to 22 million).
- At present death rates, the older population is expected to increase 40% to 31 million by 2000. If the present low birth rate continues, these 31 million will be 11.7% of the total population of about 262 million. If the birth rate should increase very significantly, they would represent 10.7% of a total population of about 287 million.



The Older Population in the Twentieth Century

Year	Total	Men	Women	Ratio Women/Men
1900	3,080,000	1,555,000	1,525,000	98/100
1930	6,634,000	3,325,000	3,309,000	100/100
1970	19,972,000	8,367,000	11,605,000	139/100
1974	21,815,000	8,966,000	12,849,000	143/100
2000	30,600,000	12,041,000	18,558,000	154/100

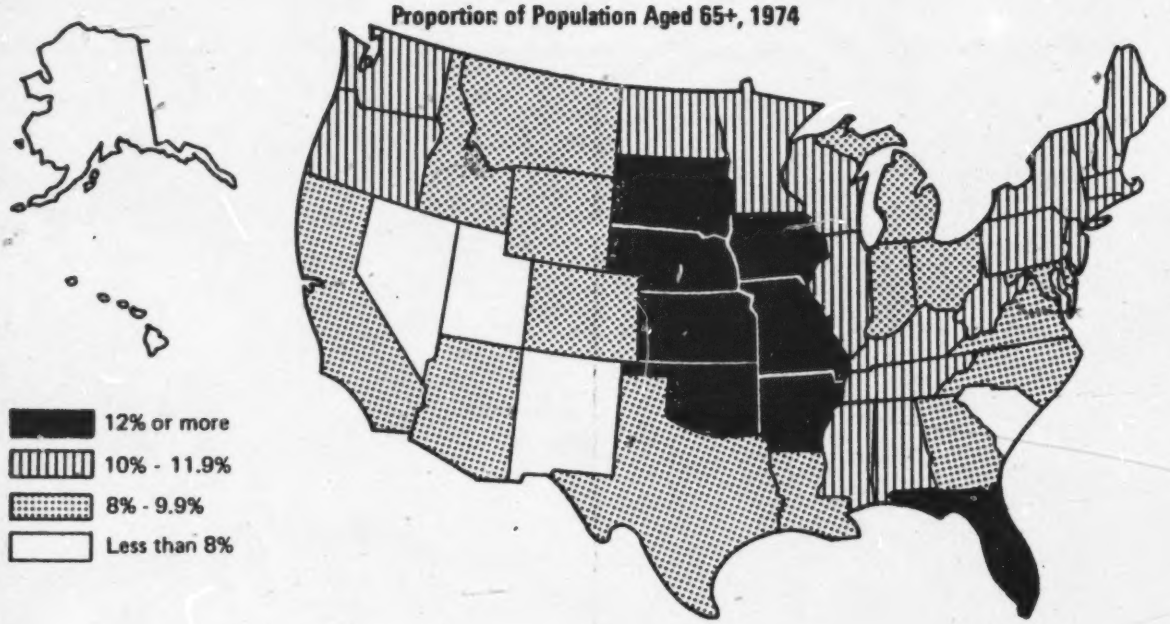
Where do older Americans live in the United States?

- In 1974, about half (45.4%) of persons aged 65+ lived in the six most populous States —California, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas—and Florida (the eighth most populous). Each of these States had more than one million older persons. The 65+ population in two States (California and New York) will soon reach 2 million.
- Eight States had an unusually high proportion of older persons (12% or more) in their total populations—Florida (15.5%), Arkansas (12.8%), Iowa (12.6%), Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas (12.4% each), South Dakota (12.3%), and Oklahoma (12.1%).

Estimated Population Aged 65+, by State, 1974

State	Number (000's)	Percent of Total Population	Rank[1]	Percent Increase, 1970-74
Total	22,023	10.4	--	9.3
Alabama	365	10.2	24t	12.7
Alaska	8	2.4	55	14.3
Arizona	211	9.8	30t	31.1
Arkansas	264	12.8	2	11.4
California	1,986	9.5	34t	10.8
Colorado	204	8.2	44	9.1
Connecticut	314	10.2	24t	9.0
Delaware	48	8.4	42t	9.1
District of Columbia	71	9.8	30t	1.4
Florida	1,267	15.7	1	28.6
Georgia	413	8.5	41	13.2
Hawaii	53	6.3	51	20.5
Idaho	76	9.5	34t	13.4
Illinois	1,134	10.2	24t	4.1
Indiana	522	9.8	30t	6.1
Iowa	360	12.6	3	3.2
Kansas	281	12.4	4t	6.0
Kentucky	364	10.8	20	8.3
Louisiana	337	9.0	37	10.5
Maine	122	11.7	10	7.0
Maryland	333	8.1	45	11.7

Proportion of Population Aged 65+, 1974



State	Number (000's)	Percent of Total Population	Rank[1]	Percent Increase, 1970-74
Massachusetts	661	11.4	12t	4.4
Michigan	798	8.8	39t	6.5
Minnesota	432	11.0	17t	6.1
Mississippi	246	10.6	21t	11.3
Missouri	591	12.4	4t	5.9
Montana	73	9.9	29	7.4
Nebraska	191	12.4	4t	4.4
Nevada	41	7.2	49	32.3
New Hampshire	86	10.6	21t	10.3
New Jersey	749	10.2	24t	7.9
New Mexico	86	7.7	47	22.9
New York	1,998	11.0	17t	2.4
North Carolina	473	8.8	39t	14.8
North Dakota	72	11.3	14	9.1
Ohio	1,050	9.8	30t	6.1
Oklahoma	328	12.1	8	9.7
Oregon	251	11.1	15t	11.1
Pennsylvania	1,348	11.4	12t	6.4
Rhode Island	111	11.8	9	6.7
South Carolina	219	7.9	46	15.3
South Dakota	84	12.3	7	5.0
Tennessee	429	10.4	23	12.3
Texas	1,120	9.3	36	13.4
Utah	88	7.5	48	14.3
Vermont	51	10.9	19	8.5
Virginia	410	8.4	42t	12.6
Washington	354	10.2	24t	10.6
West Virginia	206	11.5	11	6.2
Wisconsin	505	11.1	15t	7.2
Wyoming	32	8.9	38	6.7
American Samoa	1	3.4	53t	0.0
Guam	2	2.1	56	20.0
Puerto Rico	198	6.6	50	11.8
Trust Territories	4	3.7	52	15.2
Virgin Islands	3	3.4	53t	37.5

[1] States are ranked in order of decreasing percentages (highest percentage is rank 1, lowest is 51)

t Tied in ranking. States with identical percentages receive identical rank number with following rank number(s) skipped to allow for number in tie.

Has life expectancy changed?

• A child born in 1900 could expect to live an average of about 47 years; a child born in 1973 could expect to live 24 years longer—an average of 71 years. The major part of the increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children and young adults. More people now reach old age, but then do not live much longer than did their ancestors who reached age 65 in 1900.

• At age 65, life expectancy is 15 years—13 years for men but 17 years for women. As a result of this sex difference in life expectancy, which begins at birth, there were 143 older women per 100 older men in 1974 and the disparity continued to grow with age. (Assuming that the 1973 death rates do not change in the future, 80% of female children will live to the age of 65 as compared with only 65% for male children.)

• More than 1.2 million older people died in 1972, a rate of 59.2 per 1,000—73 for men and 50 for women. The death rate for the under-65 group was 4 per 1,000.

• Three-fifths of all of the deaths of older persons resulted from heart disease (45%) and cancer (16%).

What are the costs of health care?

• In 1973, the Nation spent approximately 80 billion dollars for personal health care. About 28% of this amount was spent for older persons. The per capita health care cost for an older person was $1,052, over 2½ times as much as the $384 spent for younger adults. Benefits from government programs such as Medicare accounted for nearly two-thirds of the health expenditures of older persons, as compared with one quarter for adults under 65.

What are the living arrangements of older persons?

• About 5% or approximately one million older people lived in institutions of all kinds in 1974.

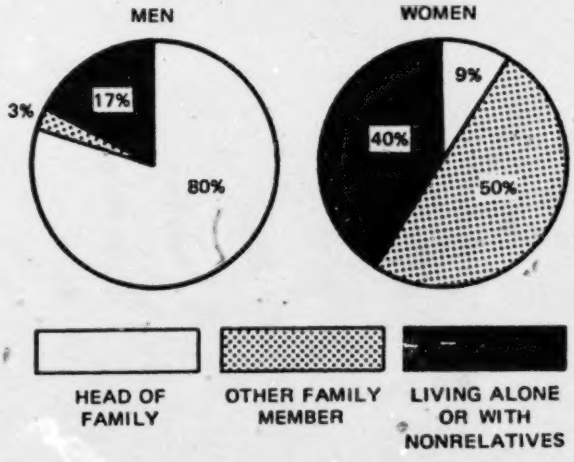
• Most older persons lived in a family setting.

• In the noninstitutional population, the numbers of older men and older women living in a family setting were about the same (7.1 million men, 7.2 million women), but since there are many more older women than older men (143 per 100), the proportion of older men in family settings was 83% and of women, 60%.

• More than one-third of all older persons (6.3 million; 1.4 million men and 4.8 million women) lived alone or with nonrelatives (40% of all older women but only 17% of all older men).

• Within the older population the proportion living in family settings decreases rapidly with advancing age.

Living Arrangements, 1974
(Noninstitutional Population)

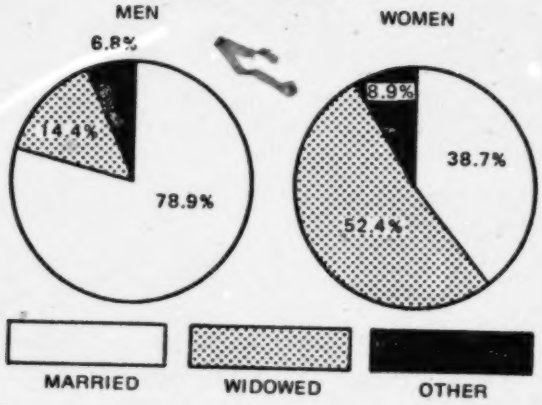


What is the marital status of older persons?

- In 1974, most older men (79%) were married; most older women (52%) were widows. There were more than five times as many widows as widowers.
- About one-third (36.4%) of the older married men had wives under 65 years of age.
- In 1971 the States* that participated in the reporting program for marriages reported 16,410 brides and 33,056 grooms aged 65+. These were first marriages for about 7% of the women and 5% of the men. Most were remarriages of older persons who were previously widowed (70% of the brides and 67% of the grooms).

* A total of 41 States and the District of Columbia.

Distribution of Older Persons by Marital Status, 1974



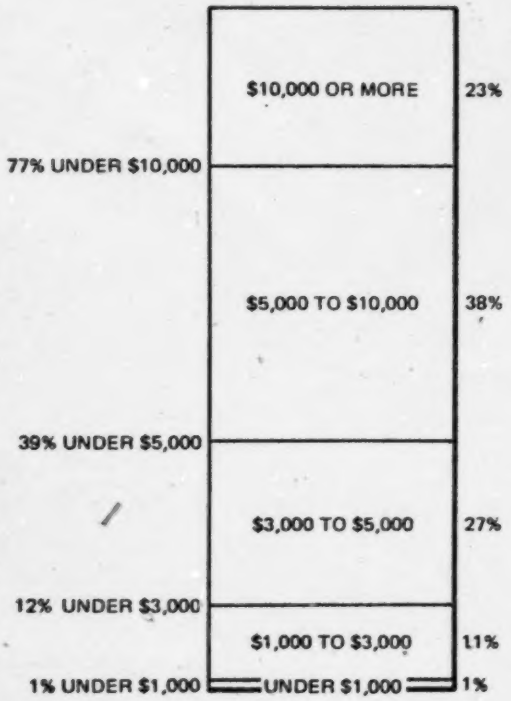
Distribution of Older Persons by Marital Status, 1900 and 1974

Status	1974		1900	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married	78.9	38.7	67.3	34.3
Widowed	14.4	52.4	26.5	59.5
Other				
Divorced	2.2	2.6	0.5	0.3
Never married	4.6	6.3	5.8	6.0

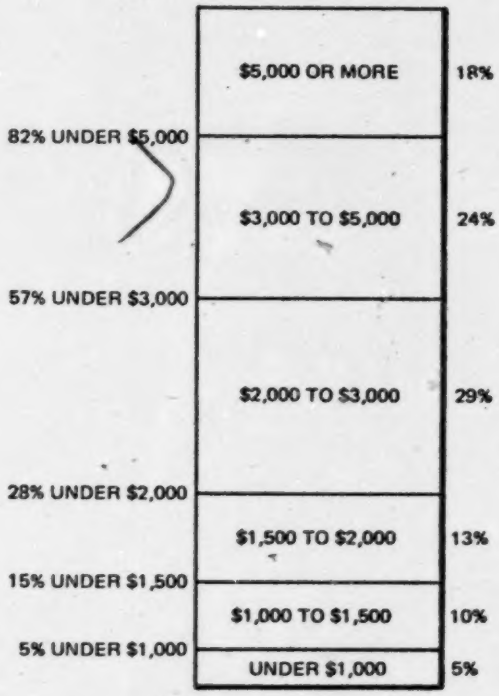
What is the income situation for older persons? *

- Some are well off. About 1.2 million couples with 65+ heads had incomes of $10,000 or more in 1973. Some 2 million older couples had incomes between $5,000 and $10,000.
- Many are not well off. About 655 thousand couples had incomes under $3,000 ($58 a week).
- About 944 thousand older persons living alone or with nonrelatives had incomes under $1,500 ($29 a week).
- About 16% (3.4 million) of older people were below the poverty level in 1973. Approximately 2 million or 60% of these poor were living alone or with nonrelatives; of these, 1.6 million were women, mostly widows. Of the 23 million poor persons of all ages, 15% were 65+.

Income Distribution of 5.3 Million Couples With Heads 65+, 1973



Income Distribution of 6.3 Million Persons Aged 63+ Living Alone or With Nonrelatives, 1973

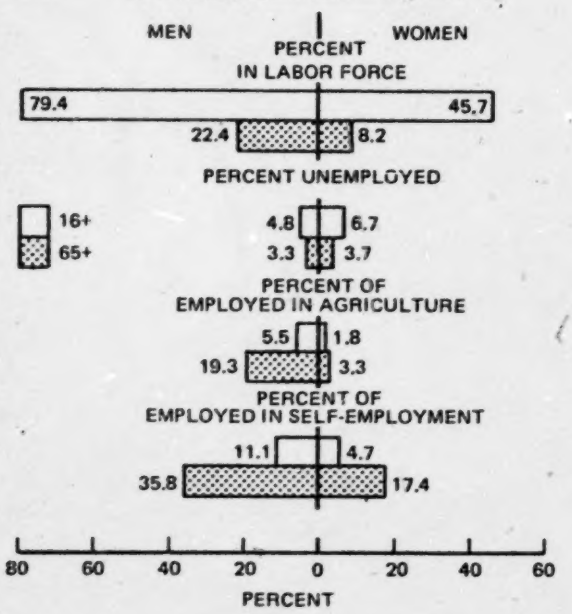


* Income data is tabulated by age of head of family or of a person living alone or with nonrelatives. Data presented above represent only couples (2-person husband-wife families) or individuals living alone or with nonrelatives to avoid factors introduced by presence of family members of other ages.

How many older persons work?

- More than 2.9 million or 14% of older people were in the labor force—either working or actively seeking work—in 1974.
- They make up 3.1% of the U.S. labor force.
- Slightly more than a fifth of the older men (1.9 million) and about 8% of the older women (1.0 million) are in the labor force.
- Only 3.4% or 1 in 30 older people in the labor force were unemployed.
- A large proportion of older men who work are in low-paying agricultural jobs (see chart below).
- The male labor force participation rate has decreased steadily from 2 of 3 older men in 1900 to 1 in 5 in 1974; the female rate rose slightly from 1 in 12 in 1900 to 1 in 10 in 1972, but dropped to 1 in 12 in 1974.

Older Persons in the Labor Force, 1974



Health status and health care utilization

- Chronic conditions are more prevalent among older persons than younger. In 1973, about 38% of older persons were limited in their major activity (working or keeping house) due to such conditions, as compared to only 7% for younger persons.
- In 1972, about 18% of the 65+ group had an interference with their mobility due to chronic conditions—6% had some trouble getting around alone, 7% needed a mechanical aid to get around, and 5% were homebound.
- In 1973, older people had about a 1 in 6 chance of being hospitalized during a year, higher than for persons under 65 (1 in 10). The proportion with more than one hospitalization during a year was also greater for older people (3.8% vs 1.6%). Once in the hospital, older people stayed about 5 days longer than younger patients (12.2 vs 7.2 days).
- On the average, older people had one-third more physician visits than did persons under 65 (6.5 vs 4.8 visits) in 1973, with a higher proportion of visits occurring within the last 6 months.
- Half of the older population had either not seen a dentist for 5 or more years or had never visited a dentist. In 1971, dental visits of older persons were much more likely to be for denture work (36% vs 12%) and less likely to be for examinations or teeth cleaning (31% vs 42%) than for younger persons.
- In 1971, older people were twice as likely to wear glasses and 13 times as likely to use a hearing aid. About 92% of persons 65 years old and over wore eyeglasses or contact lenses and 5% used hearing aids.

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